

The Importance of Trials – First Peter 1:3-9

I. Introduction:

- A. As we have seen, Peter begins his letter by praising God and magnifying salvation by grace.
1. He reminds us that our deliverance from sin & our adoption into the family of Jehovah is absolutely secure.
 2. That is because salvation is rooted, not in us, but in the Triune God, referring to each person of the Trinity.
 3. Then we are kept by the power of God until the completion of salvation – all for His glory.
 4. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- B. **Despite** our future blessings and God’s guarantee of those blessings **here we are**.
1. We are still in the sinful world and in fleshly bodies; bodies which are more prone to sin than to glorify God.
 2. We find that the general curse which God placed on His creation is still whittling away at us, weakening us in so many different ways.
 3. And we are surrounded by a Satanically controlled world which hates our Saviour and often makes our daily lives miserable through temptations and testings.

II. Every Christian faces the **POTENTIAL** of earthly trials and spiritual pressure.

- A. It comes with our new lives in Christ and with our Heavenly citizenship.
1. Peter says, *“You who are kept by the power of God, now for a season face manifold temptations.”*
 2. The word *“temptations”* requires some explanation, because it is not what most people usually think.
 3. It is **not** some sort of **push into sin**; it is not a **Satanic temptation** to **disobey the Lord**.
 4. The word refers to *“a test”* of some sort; a test which admittedly could lead to sin, but not necessarily.
 5. The same Greek word is used by **Peter** in **4:12**: *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to **TRY** you (test you)...”*
- B. The Lord Jesus tells us to pray that God would not lead us into this kind of temptation.
1. Would the Lord tempt us to sin? **James** tells us that the idea is blasphemous.
 2. But the Lord can, and often does, lead us into situations where our faith or resolve **may be tested**.
 3. Notice what Peter says in **verse 6**: *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, **if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.**”*
 - a. What is implied in the words, *“if need be?”* Does anyone *“need”* to be tested?
 - b. The truth of the matter is: Yes, we need to be tested, but that decision is one to be made by the Lord.
 - c. The sovereign God may say, *“This saint needs to tried for this reason or for that reason.”*
 4. **BUT**, *“there hath **NO temptation** taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the **temptation** also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” – I Corinthians 10:13.*
 5. I won’t take any more time on this; please believe me: Peter refers to *“testings”* when he says *“temptation.”*
- C. He says, *“Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations (tests); (in order) **THAT** the trial of your faith... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*
1. He speaks of these trials as being **seasonal**, in the sense that they come and go, and sometimes they are more severe than at other times.
 - a. There have been periods in history when religious persecution has been deadly.
 - b. And most Christians find that problems & spiritual opposition come & go at various points in their lives.
 - c. When they were newly saved, or are most excited about serving the Lord, there is more pressure against them than when they are lethargic and backslidden.
 2. Peter says that these *“seasonal”* trials may come in waves of different varieties: *“manifold temptations.”*
 3. Sometimes we may be able to brush them off, but at other times they are so heavy they crush us.
 4. When he says, *“Ye are in heaviness,”* he is speaking of excessive sorrow and grief.
 5. Perhaps some of these Asian Christians were losing loved ones through persecution.
 6. Perhaps they were in despair because they couldn’t feed their families, because they had lost their jobs for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- D. Why is it that, like Peter, **James** begins his epistle by referring to these testings?
1. *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (testings) ..."*
 2. Why does the **Lord Jesus** refer to this kind of temptation so often? Why does **Paul** speak of it?
 3. And why do we find it in the **Revelation** where the Lord encourages the church in Philadelphia saying...
 - a. *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,*
 - b. *which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."*
 4. The answer is: because these trials are **common** among God's saints, **and** because...

III. The trials which fall upon God's saint are **IMPORTANT**.

- A. They are important because they **reveal** the **strength** of our **faith**, and they **strengthen** our **faith**.
1. This is one reason why *"if need be"* we face manifold temptations.
 2. Remember: Faith is the spiritual umbilical cord which connects us to the Lord.
 3. Granted, the **faith** necessary for **salvation** does not have to be strong because it is the Lord who saves, not the faith we put in Him.
 4. But after that, the **stronger** our **faith** in the Lord, the stronger will be our **ability** to **serve** and **glorify Him**.
 5. And if trials strengthen our faith then those trials are beneficial.
 6. Going back to **James**: *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."*
 7. Didn't the Holy Spirit praise the faith of those people in **Hebrews 11**?
 8. He said that the world was not worthy of them (**11:38**), in part because of their faith.
- B. Before taking the subject further, **Peter** said, *"The trial of your faith is more precious than gold."*
1. How can painful testings be of more value than gold?
 2. One of the brethren answered that question the other day, pointing out to me that when people's bank accounts are filled with money, they tend to trust those accounts more than they trust God.
 3. I can't put words into **Elijah's** mouth, but I think he was as happy & close to the Lord when he was waiting for the ravens to deliver his next meal as when he was overseeing the work of several Bible schools.
 4. And what if **Job** had **never suffered** all those great losses in his life?
 - a. Undoubtedly, when he was healthy and wealthy with a happy wife & prosperous kids, he loved his God.
 - b. But when he was stripped of everything and was cast upon the Lord alone, even though it may have taken some time, eventually his spiritual life grew stronger.
 - c. I have no doubt that when he later celebrated his 120th or 130th birthday, with a voice as strong as ever, he said, *"The trials of my faith have given me wealth untold."*
 5. And I hope that you and I can say the same thing when we come to the end of our earthly lives and trials.
 6. I hope we say the same thing when we stand before the sovereign God who providentially gave them to us.
- C. **The more spiritual** the Christian, the **more** that person will **prize** *"praise, honour"* and *"glory"* above gold.
1. *"That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*
 2. Of whose *"praise, honour"* and *"glory"* is Peter speaking? Isn't it that of **the suffering saint**?
 3. At the appearing of Christ, the words *"well done thou good and faithful servant,"* will be heard by many.
 - a. And I'm not referring only to evangelists and pastors.
 - b. I include every day saints, including Christian ladies who have endured so much in this world.
 4. But isn't it implied behind those words, that **not everyone** will be **honored** to the same degree?
 5. Not only is everyone tried in their own specific way, but everyone's response to those trials will differ.
 6. Like other aspects of our Heavenly rewards this *"praise, honour"* and *"glory"* will differ for everyone.

- D. I got a call from Manitoba yesterday, and I learned that the man who has been doing most of the preaching at the Bible Baptist Church fell and broke both elbows, keeping him from two months of work.
1. There is a trial which God has permitted for some reason known only to Him.
 2. Some people would be **angry** with themselves for tripping, or with God for permitting such an *“accident.”*
 3. Others would **feel sorry** for themselves, while some would look at it as an **opportunity**.
 4. I would hope that Bro. Luke is filling his days with more Bible study than was possible before when he was working full time for Otis Elevator Company.
 5. His response, if it glorifies the Lord, will be repaid with *“praise, honour”* and *“glory”* worthy of that response, even though it didn’t come through persecution.
 6. Trials are trials no matter what the cause.
- E. **James** may refer to some of that *“praise, honour”* and *“glory”* when he says,
1. *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”*
 2. Of course there is *“enduring temptation,”* and there is **enduring** that **temptation well**.
 3. **Revelation 4** tells us that *“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created (including our trials).”*
 4. How many of the crowns that we shall return to the Lord will come from our victory during our trials?
- F. Something else Peter says about trials comes up in **chapter 4:**
1. *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as through some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are **partakers of Christ’s suffering;** that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”*
 2. Our Saviour was severely tested throughout His earthy life and particularly after those 40 days of fasting.
 3. In the will, and by the grace of God, **when WE** endure testing, we are, in a way, united to Him.
 4. Again, if suffering for the Lord in some way brings us closer to the Saviour, isn’t that a good thing?

IV. OTHER SCRIPTURES add other arguments about the importance of trials.

- A. I quoted **I Corinthians 10:13** to show you that *“temptation”* refers to *“testing,”* but consider it again.
1. The trials of life give us the opportunity to see the **faithfulness** of the **Lord**.
 2. *“There hath no **TEMPTATION** taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the **TEMPTATION** also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*
 3. I won’t put words into the Lord’s mouth, but I would like to think that **God delights** in the **opportunity** to **demonstrate His faithfulness** along with His many **other attributes**.
 4. Look at how He proved his **faithfulness to Job** and then demonstrating His omnipotence.
 5. *“So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12).*
 6. **II Peter** adds, *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...”*
 7. He not only **knows how** to deliver, He **does deliver**.
- B. In **Galatians 4** Paul says, *“Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.*
1. *And my temptation (trials and tribulations) which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected me...”*
 2. Another one of the effects of life’s difficulties is in the **revelation** of **true friendship**.
 3. Again, consider Job and his *“friends.”*
 - a. How many people had earlier called Job their friend when life was good, when he was rich & generous?
 - b. But they refused to show up to comfort him when he was down.
 - c. And how did those who did come by actually treat him? Were they really friends and friendly?

4. Not only do **our trials** reveal who our friends are, but the **trials of others** provide us with opportunities to be friends to them.
 5. They prove whether or not **we** ought be called *“friends.”*
- C. Trials, testings and temptations are either good for us, or they hurt us, depending on our response.
1. **James** exhorts: *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”*
 2. And **Peter** tells us, *“Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations (tests); **THAT** the trial of your faith... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”*
 3. And *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you... But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are **partakers** of **Christ’s suffering**; that, when His glory shall be **REVEALED**, ye may be glad also with **exceeding joy.**”*